

To: Russo, Rebecca[Russo.Rebecca@epa.gov]
From: McGrath, Shaun
Sent: Thur 9/10/2015 12:16:31 AM
Subject: Re: Committee Holds Hearing on Animas River Spill: Democratic Members Emphasize the Need to Address the Hazards from Mining Activity

Where did this article come from?

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On Sep 9, 2015, at 5:41 PM, Russo, Rebecca <Russo.Rebecca@epa.gov> wrote:

Committee Holds Hearing on Animas River Spill

Democratic Members Emphasize the Need to Address the Hazards from Mining Activity

Sep 9, 2015

(Washington, DC) – Today, the **Committee on Science, Space, and Technology** held a hearing on the August 5th spill of contaminated mine wastewater from the Gold King mine into the Animas River. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a team of contractors accidentally caused the release of 3 million gallons of wastewater during an exploratory effort to find solutions for remediating the flow of toxic mine wastewater into the Animas River Watershed.

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) said in her opening statement, “I believe it is important to understand what happened on August 5th and why, and explore what lessons we can learn from this event. However, we should also take this opportunity to highlight the inherently dirty, dangerous, and environmentally damaging process of metal mining.”

She continued, “I am not discounting the significance of the August 5th

event at the Gold King mine or its potential environmental impact, but it is important to understand that the issue of mine drainage into the Animas Watershed did not begin last month. The EPA was acting as an environmental firefighter when they went to the Gold King mine. They were attempting to damp down a raging environmental hazard that had endangered the Animas Watershed for decades.”

Rep. Ed Perlmutter (D-CO) said, “The release at Gold King Mine was terrible and impacted communities in Colorado as well as New Mexico and the Navajo Nation. I am glad the EPA is taking responsibility for the mistakes and will work with all these communities impacted by these events. But it’s important to keep this release in perspective and understand this incident points to a much larger problem that’s been 100 years in the making. Each year, the Gold King, Mogul, American Tunnel, and Red & Bonita Mines release over 330 million gallons of wastewater into the Animas River. Instead of trying to assign blame to an agency working to clean up and prevent these releases, Congress needs to help states and local communities assess the dangers of similar mines and how we can provide the resources and tools necessary to speed up remediation work to minimize the impact to our communities and our environment.”

After the hearing, **Ranking Member Johnson** stressed the political nature of the Majority’s interest in this spill. She said, “It is unfortunate that the Majority’s interest in the accidental release of wastewater from the Gold King Mine in Silverton, Colorado, seems to be driven almost solely by EPA’s involvement in the August 5th accident. It would be refreshing if the Majority would extend the same zeal it has shown in investigating EPA’s actions in the Silverton release to a comparable effort to hold mining corporations accountable for a long standing pattern of violating federal environmental regulations.

“In the past three years 761 U.S. metal mining facilities violated federal environmental regulations. This industry is a bigger contributor of toxic chemical releases to the environment than any other. In 2013 alone, the metal mining industry accounted for 47%--that is, almost half--of all toxic chemical releases by all industries in the United States, releasing or disposing of nearly four billion pounds of toxic chemicals.

“I suspect that the Majority’s sudden interest in investigating the

environmental consequences of the Gold King Mine accident will soon fade away and we will leave unexamined the far larger environmental impact of the metal mining industry. In the meantime, local leaders like Mayor Brookie and his constituents will continue to have to cope with the environmental legacy and public health consequences of metal mining's decades of damage to the environment.”

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